PANS Eaglet

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The 1982 Pope John Paul II Commemorative Coins of Communist Poland

By Steven Bieda

On October 16, 1978, following the unexpected death of Pope John Paul I (who served only 33 days as pope) and the second papal conclave of 1978, the first non-Italian pope since Pope Adrian VI in the 16th century was announced to the world. The conclave had selected Karol Wojtyla the Archbishop of Krakow as pope. He took the name Pope John Paul II in honor of his immediate predecessor, who in turn had selected the name (John Paul I) in honor of his two immediate predecessors, Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul IV.

As Pope, John Paul II was a relatively young 58 years old when he ascended to the papacy and he would end up having the third longest papacy on record. He was celebrated worldwide as an energetic and charismatic pope. In his native Poland, at that time still a communist nation, his popularity was unparalleled, and many believe his first visit as Pope in June of 1979 provided the inspiration and moral force for anti-communist sentiment and resistance, and this came at a momentous time in Poland's history, as the Solidarity movement was becoming a major force for change in Poland. He would ultimately visit Poland nice times a Pope, and was the most traveled pope in history, having visited 127 nations during his papacy.

Of interest here are a couple of early Polish issues depicting Pope John Paul II, a somewhat surprising choice to be issued by a country that was communist and officially atheist. While Poland would ultimately issue a number of coins depicting John Paul II, for the Pope's planned 1983 visit to Poland (this trip being the Pope's second to Poland) the Polish government issued several 1982 dated commemorative coins featuring Pope John Paul II.

These coins included silver 100, 200 and 1000 Złoty coins featuring a profile of Pope John Paul II wearing a zucchetto (skull cap) facing the viewer's left. These coins are listed in Krause as Y# 136, Y#137 and Y#144. Gold coins were also issued, in denominations of 1000, 2000 and 10,000 Złoty. The gold coins are listed in Krause as Y# 138, Y#139 and Y# 164. The gold coins had a three-quarter head -and-shoulders depiction of the Pope wearing his miter and holding his papal ferula. While the gold coins had relatively small mintages (the 10,000 Złoty had a mintage of 700 for the proof and 200 for the uncirculated versions), the silver 1000 Złoty piece had a sizeable mintage of 803,000. In addition, the silver 1000 złoty design was struck again with a 1983 date, in tandem with the Pope's 1983 visit to Poland, this time with an even higher mintage of 1,530,000 for an uncirculated version, as well as 10,000 proof coins.

These designs would be issued again, with the Polish government issuing new coins featuring the 1982 designs in tandem with subsequent visits over the next several years, and these proved to be popular with the collecting public. Over the years, John Paul II was a frequent subject for Polish

commemorative coins, including several circulating commemorative 2 Złoty coins memorializing his death in 2005 as well as issues commemorating when he was beatified and canonized (Saint Pope John Paul II's feast date is October 22).

Other nations, would similarly issue commemorative coins marking Pope John Paul II's visit to their countries, including other communist countries such as Cuba, but the 1982 coins are the first coins of a communist country to honor a religious figure in this way. Considering Pope John Paul's impact on the collapse of the communist state, these coins are an interesting part of Polish numismatic history.

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An impressive medal, now with a PANS connection

By Mark Benvenuto

Most of us who have been collecting for some time are aware that every now and then, we just happen to be in the right place at the right time, at least when it comes to a great find or purchase of some numismatic item. One came rather recently, at a PANS meeting, believe it or not. It was the purchase of the impressive medal shown here. We'll admit the medal – the apparent obverse of which depicts a portion of aj famous David Teniers painting titled, "The Alchemist" – doesn't have a Polish connection, as Teniers was Flemish. But the medal's apparent reverse marks it as a piece of advertising for the Eaton-Clark Company, which had a major presence in the Detroit-Windsor area, probably not all that far from where PANS meets.

The scene depicting the alchemist is a portion of a much larger, more detailed painting Teniers executed in the mid-1600's. At that time in Europe, paintings of scientists were popular. The idea of the alchemist transforming materials fit in well with the Eaton-Clark Company working in "Chemicals and dyestuffs," as noted on the medal, since such a firm also dealt in transforming one material into another.

According to online sources, the Gorham Manufacturing Company produced this medal in 1938 as a tribute to Eaton-Clark reaching its 100th anniversary.

► Spot prices as of 27 October 2024	
Gold:	$ 2,749.00/troy ounce
Silver:	$ 33.71/troy ounce
Copper:	$ 4.37/pound
Platinum:	$ 1,030.00/troy ounce
Palladium:	$ 1,205.00/troy ounce
$US-Złoty exchange: 4.01	

Have you been able to join us on the web? Try: www.pans-club.org. Or, on Facebook? If not, please go to Facebook, find PANS, and see what events are coming up for our society.

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Once again, come to the meetings and win

Your PANS meets once a month, and is generous in raffling off one Polish coin per meeting. Why not attend a meeting, and see if you can add something to your growing collection?

Send in your finds.

Have you found any Polish coins of note, perhaps squirreled away in some dealer's stock of foreign coins? If you have found a hidden treasure, or one hiding in plain sight, e-mail Mark a photo and a brief write-up of how you came upon it. The PANS members will most likely be interested in hearing about it.

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Our recent PANS show was a big success. Thanks go to our friends in the Huron Valley Numismatic Society, which had numerous active members who worked with PANS at the show. Such help is greatly appreciated!

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Join Our Club

We meet on the first Saturday of the month at 11:00 AM at the American Polish Cultural Center located at 2975 East Maple Road (15 Mile Road) at Dequindre Road in Troy, Michigan. Visit the PANS Club website at www.pans-club.org for details. We currently have 10 meetings per year (August through May) with 2 months off during the summer. The Polish American Numismatic Society also plans a Christmas Oplatek Dinner during the Holiday Season. Meeting agendas include business matters and informative lectures from renowned guest speakers on topics including error and variety coins, significant coins in Polish history, Hamtramck scrip, coin photography. Open and lively member discussions about US and Polish numismatics are encouraged. Of course, the meeting would not be complete without coffee and delicious Polish pastries. The Polish American Numismatic Society hosts two very successful public coin show at the American Polish Cultural Center. Our primary show always takes place on the third Sunday of February. PANS has also hosted a second show in August. Shows have been co-hosted with other clubs in the region. If you have any interest in numismatics, please attend a meeting and sign up as a member. PANS dues are only $15.00 per year. PANS Club Membership is a great way to meet collectors with similar interests and knowledgeable dealers willing to share their experiences in a hobby that we all enjoy. To become a member-in-good-standing, plan to attend a minimum of 5 meetings per year and perform club-related duties at PANS Club sponsored Coin Shows.

Membership Application

I hereby make application for membership in the Polish American Numismatic Society, subject to the rules and regulations set forth in the Constitution and By-laws.

SIGNATURE: _____

PRINT NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE/ZIP: _____

EMAIL: _____

RECOMMENDED BY: _____

DATE ACCEPTED: _____

FIRST YEAR DUES PAID: _____

I COLLECT: _____

Attend a meeting or mail to: PANS, PO BOX 80515, ROCHESTER, MI 48308